

SECRET

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : SR/ACOP

FROM : Acting Chief, SR

SUBJECT:

DATE: 31 January 1962

1. Attached was given me by [redacted] and represents a continuing knotty problem we have had with one of the old DOB cases. We ought to take OO off the hook on this soonest. The one unknown as far as I am concerned is whether or not we still have any relationship with MIERLAK. I would assume that we don't. In addition, presumably he still holds an influential position in the BNR. If such is the case, it probably would not be wise to offend him by revealing to his relatives the fact that he had accepted responsibility for their trip to the Soviet Union. In this case it might then be necessary for us to reimburse these people as a matter of security and public relations. [redacted] is somewhat handicapped by the lack of any comprehensible records or case files on this.

2. I wish that you would look into this and determine the equities. Whatever decision you make is fine with me on this.

HJO/r

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DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

D R A F T

Philip E. Launis (C.M.), the so called middle-man in this situation, was employed by this Agency as a contract spotter for the period 1 October 1957 through 21 July 1959 at a salary of \$150.00 per month. He was under the immediate control of staff employees [] and [] during this period. His primary value was in the Byelorussian area of Soviet influence. He was born on 25 December 1919 in Dziatomla in the former Polish part of Byelorussia, and progressively became influential in Byelorussian affairs in exile. He founded the White Russian Association in Argentina, later becoming chairman of the U. S. Council of the BNR.

As early as 13 January 1958 Subject was approached by [] and [] regarding submission of 2-3 candidates, citizens of the U.S., for legal travel to Byelorussia, and was briefed on qualifications for such candidates as well as accomplishments expected. At this time he stated he would probably do this under the guise of BNR sponsorship, but was told that this was not the intent and that our man [] would indicate other than BNR interest.

Subsequently in 1958 and 1959 he advised our people of certain individuals who he knew were available for such travel.

In the early part of 1959 conversations, ~~mostly oral~~, were held between [] and Launis regarding the possible use of the ~~Marlaks~~ on a trip to Byelorussia. They made this trip apparently under close scrutiny by the Communists, were arrested, film confiscated, and subjected to almost constant surveillance. Upon their return they were debriefed and subsequently told that there would be no reimbursement for the trip and/or their efforts. It was felt in December 1959 that this would close the case but it obviously has not.

Review of the file brings out the following salient facts:

1. Emphasis had been placed on recruitment of Byelorussian ~~RED~~SKIN candidates sufficient to make this an objective for Launis.
2. He did react to this emphasis by making certain recommendations and furnishing candidate potentials in addition to the Marlaks.
3. Nothing exists in the files indicating final Agency approval or even case officer assent for these people to travel under our onus.
4. There was obvious dilatory action on the part of the Agency in making a final decision as to whether or not to back the travel of these people.
5. They were given assignments by Mierlak, particularly in the Minsk area.
6. Our Agency OO people debriefed them, lending credence.
7. A very obvious economy measure was applied ~~indiscriminately in this case.~~
8. OO has more than an average interest in this case since the final disposition of it can well affect OO influence in this area and specifically with this ethnic group.
9. A statement was made by an Agency representative stating that if they were used, perhaps Mr. Marlak's portion, \$900.00 might be paid.

Actually, there are many facets to this case, but procrastination seems to be prominent among them as well as a lack of arbitration on the part of the Agency. A possibility of use was constantly held out to these people, although no final commitment was ever made. Mierlak reluctantly signed these statements and no doubt regrets them. It is felt that he perhaps has told them about his acceptance of responsibility, but has quietly advised them to push on their own since he himself feels no current obligation to us. Also we must not overlook the position of the Agency in this ethnic community.

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It is hard to believe they wanted a free ride, for what they eventually faced and failed to accomplish would indicate great duress, and it is felt they could well have contemplated such difficulty; however, they still went ahead in the hope of accomplishing something worthwhile.